THE OGDEN STANDARD

TRIALS AND TROUBLES OF THE ATHLETIC RECORD BREAKER

MANY Snares and Pitfalls Mark the Path of the Strivers for Supremacy in the World of Sport—Gallant Effort Sometimes Fails Purely by Untoward Mischance

MELVIN SHEPPARD
L.A.A.C.

RALPH ROSE
OLYMPIC A C

MARTIN SHERIDAN
I-A A C

PLATT ADAMS
N Y A C

MATT McGRATH
N Y A C

H PORTER
I-A A C

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If the man lives who can watch unmoved the breaking of a world's athletic record he must be lacking in warm, red blood. There is something so wonderfully stirring about the thought that the best of achievements of hundreds of one time champions have been laid in the dust that one can hardly help joining the enthusiastic crowd as it rises irresistibly to its feet, eager to voice its tribute to the newly crowned king with rousing cheer and frenzied handclap.

But, with it all, how many in the excited throng really appreciate to its full worth the value of a world's record? How many realize the amount of gruelling work, the constant sacrifices, the bitter disappointments that are the lot of the iconoclast before the goal is reached?

It is only those who have themselves trodden the hard path that know of the hardships that have to be endured, of the obstacles and pitfalls in the way, of the shattered hopes of those who have failed and tasted the fruit of defeat, often through no lack of merit.

Everything militates against the record breaker. Numberless seeming trifles may set at naught his best efforts. Any little passing body ailment—a slight cold, a bruised muscle, a strained tendon—is quite sufficient to kill his chances. Unfavorable conditions, such as a head wind, chilly weather, a poor track or soggy ground, will also handicap him beyond hope, and the danger is ever present of even the best performances being thrown out on technicalities by the inflexible censors of the record committee of the Amateur Athletic Union.

On and off the cry is raised that the present craze for new standards is causing the authorities to accept questionable marks. But what an absurd and unjust calumny this is! If anything, the athletic tribunal sins by too much rigidity. A doubtful record has as much likelihood to pass the examining board unchallenged as the Biblical camel to squeeze through the proverbial needle's eye. The trouble is that some persons appear to be unable or unwilling to realize that sports are progressing, that long experience, the introduction of scientific methods and the growing tendency to specialize have increased tenfold the possibility of turning out better men in every way.

Poor athlete! Handicapped right and left, devoting the best years of his life to the elusive pursuit of fame, and then reaping only doubt and scepticism when he touches success!

Protests Generally Unfounded

A recent episode will give an idea of how unfounded the protests generally are and how unsound at times the opinions of even the best judges. Not long ago a prominent college coach became convinced, for unknown reasons, that the running records being established at Celtic Park by Melvin Sheppard, of the Irish-American Athletic Association, were beyond the latter's ability. Being on friendly terms with James E. Sullivan, of the Amateur Athletic Union, he decided to mention the matter to him, and frankly told him that, having complete faith in the integrity of the officials, he had come to the conclusion that the Celtic Park track must be short.

Mr. Sullivan likes nothing better than to have supposed irregularities brought to his notice and he made up his mind to settle the point then and there.

"I'll tell you what," he said to the visitor, "I value your opinion so highly that I would be glad if you would personally investigate the case for me at once. 'Fred' Rubien is in the next room and I'll ask him to accompany you. He is a civil engineer and thoroughly qualified for the task. He will measure the track in your presence and you can then report results to me."

The coach welcomed the opportunity to prove his contention and the two went away together.

A couple of hours later Mr. Sullivan's telephone bell sounded. "This is So-and-So," said a voice at the other end. "I just called you up to say that I'll never question an Amateur Athletic Union record again. We measured the track carefully twice, and both times found it a little longer distance, instead of short."

Other doubters would soon be converted were they to take the trouble to look into the methods of the Record Committee. A case in point will best illustrate how minutely any unusually high class or unlikely performance is investigated.

C. M. DANIELS
N Y A C

Every time a record is established the Amateur Athletic Union requires affidavits properly signed by the referee, measurer, judges and time keepers before taking cognizance of it. If the athlete has proved by previous work his probable ability to create the new figures these affidavits are deemed sufficient, but in the contrary case, or if the officials are not well known, every detail is carefully dissected.

The "Dan" Kelly Record.

Thus, when "Dan" Kelly was credited with having run 100 yards in 9 3-5 seconds, the committee was not satisfied with the papers turned in, although they were in perfect order, because Kelly was practically a newcomer. Question blanks were immediately sent to all the officials, asking them to state what experience they had had in the position in which they had served. Also, the measurer was requested to give particulars as to his qualifications, the tape he had used and his reason for asserting the record was correct. The timers were required to tell what stop watches they had held, of what make, when they had last been verified, and by whom.

These blanks were returned so clearly and convincingly filled that it was impossible to offer further objection and the mark was accepted.

Note, on the other hand, what the system accomplishes when everything is not just so. Just before the Olympic games of 1908 another 9 3-5 second record was applied for from New Orleans. Once more the blanks were sent out, and not a single one of them was ever seen again.

Careless and incompetent officials have been the cause of losing many well earned standards to the unfortunate athlete. I will long remember the first world's swimming record ever created by an American, and its sad fate. It was at the Olympic games of 1904, in St. Louis. C. M. Daniels, of the New York Athletic Club, had just broken into the championship class and new figures were expected of him in the two hundred and twenty yard race. When the starter's pistol sent the men off on the punishing sprint twenty watches were snapped in unison, and with eager anticipation the spectators saw the contestants plough the first leg of the one hundred and ten yard course in a swirl of foam, turn in serried ranks and strike for home. Then the pace began to tell and soon Daniels' blond head was seen to forge to the front, his long arms flashing in the sunlight. Nearer and nearer he came, rapidly increasing his lead, and it became apparent that the old mark was doomed. When he at last touched out in 2m. 44 1-5s., lowering Billington's record, the news spread like wildfire and the crowd went mad with enthusiasm.

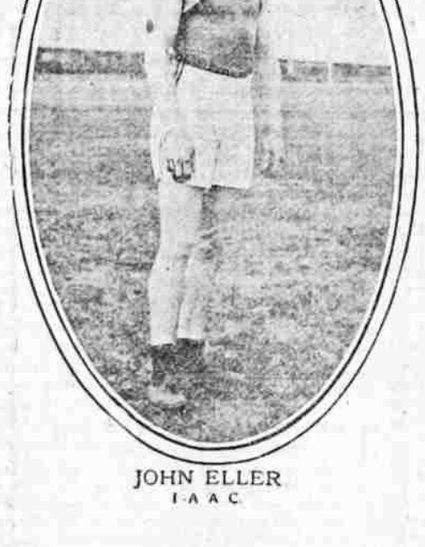
But the joy was of short duration. Agitated officials were seen talking excitedly to one another on the float, and before long the announcer's megaphone bellowed the distressing information that, one of the timekeepers having failed to catch the performance, the record would not stand. It mattered not that a dozen competent experts were ready to take their oath that the figures were correct, rules forbade taking their testimony and the record had to be rejected. A just and praiseworthy decision, of course, but Daniels and the sport suffered by it.

A similar occurrence was chronicled in 1910 on the track. It was at Celtic Park on September 5. John Heller, of the Irish-American Athletic Association, negotiated a 250 yard flight of low hurdles in 29 3-5 seconds, as against Schwegler's former standard of 31 4-5 seconds. But only two watches were clicked and the mark never found its way into the Amateur Athletic Union book. Luckily Eller has since improved his form, and a few weeks ago he was credited with a record of 29 1-5 seconds for the event.

Official neglect and incompetence take other forms, too. In the summer of 1908 W. R. Dray, of Yale, exceeded by a couple of inches the pole vault record of 12 feet 9½ inches, held by himself, at a meet in Connecticut, but those in charge had forgotten to provide a steel tape, and when the performance came up for investigation it had to be set aside, for rules do not allow the acceptance of heights measured with a tape liable to stretch.

That same summer, if memory serves me right, H. L. Trube, of the New York Athletic Club, was moving in great style and his previous breaking of the indoor one mile running record gave hope of his scoring outdoors. In the championship, held at Travers Island, he had his chance, but the lap counters made a mistake

The Lap Counters Made a Mistake and Stopped the Race Before the Full Distance Hac Been Covered



JOHN ELLER
I-A A C.

and stopped the race before the full distance had been covered. It had to be run over again, of course, and Trube's chance was gone.

Like happenings might be quoted by the score, but let it suffice to mention just one case in each instance.

Hard luck and unfavorable conditions have often been responsible for the loss of records. It is the custom in high jumping to place upon the bar a white handkerchief or cloth, to permit the contestant to better judge his leap. In one of the indoor meets a couple of years ago Harry Porter, of Pennsylvania, tried to clear record height, and succeeded, but the bar had been insecurely placed and so lightly balanced that, although he never touched it, the stir of the air produced by his body going over fluttered the handkerchief and this was enough to bring the stick tumbling after him. He failed in his next trials. Had the officials been less careless a new indoor standard would have been created.

A stroke of bad luck robbed Platt Adams, the New York Athletic Club all round athlete, of a world's mark in the broad jump. In 1910 at Celtic Park he spanned 24 feet 11 inches, beating M. Prinstein's record of 24 feet 7½ inches, but in landing he unfortunately brushed the ground with his hand at 23 feet 9½ inches, and although the judges could find no flaw in the jump and allowed him the latter distance, the record could not be recognized.

High winds have caused many performances to be discarded, and probably on several occasions without reason. One may take as example Melvin Sheppard's 500 yard run in 57 4-5 seconds, made in July, 1910, which equalled Burke's world figures. It was rejected because the breeze was thought to have helped him. A few days later he reduced the time to 57 3-5 seconds on the way to 600 yards, which leads to the belief that the other performance was most likely a fair one.

Technicalities frequently stand in the way of the athlete. In March, 1910, M. Kirjassoff, of Yale, stepped half a mile indoors in 1 minute 56 4-5 seconds, record time, but he was competing in a relay race, and this made the mark unacceptable.

Officials Hard to Satisfy.

Weight tossers have tribulations of a like nature, and others besides. Martin Sheridan, of the Irish-American Athletic Association, can tell something about it. He appears to have the knack of hurling the discus further and further at will; otherwise he might well feel indignant. He has thrown the Greek missile to record distance time and time again, only to have his performances rejected on some plea or other. In September, 1910, at Dexter Park, he sent the wooden disc 142 feet 1 inch, bettering his own standard of 140 feet 3 inches, but it was claimed that the field had a slight downward slant, and although this was not perceptible to the average mortal it was thought sufficient cause to deny a record to him. Again, on October 9, at Celtic Park, he threw 142 feet 2 inches, but a stiff breeze was blowing, yet although eyewitnesses say that its direction hindered instead of helping him, the authorities decided against him. Recently he put out the discus 141 feet 4⅝ inches in the face of a light wind, and, all other conditions being favorable, it is likely that the mark will stand.

Inaccuracies of missile has more than once proved fatal to athletes in the field events. The fraction of an inch in length of handle or a small part of an ounce in the weight are never overlooked by the sharp eyed officials. But in these matters the man himself is to blame—so let them pass. It has happened at times, however, that the circle from which the contestants threw was marked too small or too large. In the former case the chances of a foul are increased, rendering more difficult a record performance, and in the latter the Amateur Athletic Union refuses acceptance, so that any error, made one way or the other, always works to the disadvantage of the ambitious athlete.

Soggy or wet ground is a handicap that weight tossers frequently have to contend with. One June 3 at Travers Island "Matt" McGrath, of the New York Athletic Club, was primed for a record with the sixteen pound hammer, and in one of his throws sent the leaden sphere some three feet beyond standard distance. Unfortunately, it had rained in the morning hours and the throwing circle was slippery. McGrath's foot slid about an inch over the line, and the judges called the foul on him. Had conditions been ideal he would probably not only have escaped the foul but thrown even further.

So many factors enter into the consideration in record breaking that we should be only too ready to acclaim the victor. The combination is necessary of an athlete at his best (which, contrary to popular opinion, is a rather rare occurrence) and ideal conditions—neither unfavorable, for then a record is almost impossible, nor in the least favorable, for then to outward influences is attributed the high standard of the performance, and the authorities will not accept it.

With the meets wide apart and conditions ever uncertain, the reader will realize the difficulties in the path of the record breaker. He is indeed deserving of our highest admiration, so let us handclap and cheer enthusiastically with the rest when he succeeds, for he has earned our plaudits.

"HIM THAT GIVES GITS."

MISS SOPHIE, a pretty product of Pittsburg, who writes bright things for the literary market, loves epigrams, and one of her favorites is, "Him that gives gits," or words to that effect. Whereof herewith is one reason:—

Among the little kindnesses that Sophie has to her future credit, as well as present, is giving $5 a week to a worthy woman and her dependent family somewhere near Pittsburg. This she sends from New York by check with extreme regularity. On one occasion, last Christmas, say, the woman sent word to her benefactress that if she would send her $2.50 at once she need not send the usual $5, as she wanted the money for a special purpose and she would find a way to get the $5, as she already had a part of it.

Miss Sophie forthwith sent a check for $7.50, although she was making some effort herself to keep up with the charitable procession. Still she believed in the epigram and was willing to take a chance. And see how it worked out. That same week she received from an editor a check for exactly $7.50, with the explanation that in making up her account for the previous check he had overlooked seven and a half dollars' worth of epigrams. That sounds like fiction, perhaps, but if there is one thing that Sophie cannot do—she can do many things—it is to prevaricate; and this story comes direct from the lady herself.

As also does this one along the same lines and is more recent:—Sophie has a stenographer, a young and pretty New England girl, whom she found out of employment, or, at least, not with employment yielding a fair living wage. Now, lo, Sophie didn't very urgently need a stenographer, nor was she able to pay extravagant wages when she did have one, but she didn't want to see the girl subject to the temptations that go with insufficient pay, and she agreed to give her a place, temporarily, if $8 a week was enough to meet her expenses. The girl said it was three dollars more than she was receiving and she could get along on it very comfortably. The job was to continue only seven weeks, because that would bring the time up to the date of Sophie's summer departure. A rapid calculation showed that she would have to curtail her own expenditures $56 unless some good luck brought returns, but she was willing to help a needy sister, and the girl went to work.

Within a week, as before, Sophie had a letter from the editor of a magazine out of town which had been holding up a number of contributors, several of whom Sophie knew, and none of whom was sanguine of ever getting anything for her claim. The editor wrote that he regretted the financial condition of the magazine and feared that some of the creditors would have to wait a long time, but he felt that an extra effort should be made in her case and he managed to get a check for all the magazine owed her and he was enclosing it to her. The check called for $56.75, and when the recipient looked into its face she almost went into spasms. Now, if anybody of any faith tells Sophie that there is no more in the epigram "Him that gives gits" than in any one of thousands that sound well enough in print, she will throw a hot stove lid at him. And no wonder, either.

"The Psychology of Fanning," Next Week.